

**INQUIRY INTO THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN
VICTORIA**

Organisation: Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music & Performance Monash
University

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Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music and Performance response to the Inquiry into the Cultural and Creative Industries in Victoria.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit to this Inquiry. We note that the Inquiry focuses on assessing the economic impact and financial stability of the Arts in the Victorian economy. In the absence of public documentation of the finances allocated at national and state levels we focus on the social and sector impacts and the role of education in the University sector in addressing these.

The University and cultural and creative sectors have experienced cumulative impacts through policy changes and economic challenges including changes to university student contributions for arts degrees (under the 2020 Job-ready Graduates reforms) and to federal and state arts funding programs. These challenges have created precarious conditions for the workforce that affects the mental health of artists (including intending artists in education organisations) and arts organisations, and in turn the capacity of artists to produce quality creative work (Canham 2022, Gross and Musgrave 2020) and contribute to the economy. In the following we address ToRs 4 and 5 specifically and make recommendations for action.

ToR 4. The ongoing financial sustainability of the seven national performing arts training organisations ([ARTS8](#)) including whether Victoria's share of this funding is adequate:

The University sector plays a crucial role as part of the professional arts network in implementing the five pillars of the National Policy *Revive*. University arts training programs in music (BMus, BMus (Hons), PhD) provide the graduate pipeline to the seven national performing arts training organisations and Victoria's cultural and creative industries. Graduates of tertiary music programs go on to study at ANAM, for example, and form the workforce of the future. They go on to teach at nationally funded arts training institutions, perform in orchestras, bands, and other music-based activities, and produce new musical works. The ongoing financial pressure and instability experienced in the University sector has impacted music schools whose pedagogies are by necessity more costly than other forms of university education. Further, the impact of the 2020 Job-ready Graduates reform package has impacted music students as the fees for study have increased. As funding has declined in the University sector for undergraduate education and training in the creative arts, the breadth and depth of programs has diminished. This has immediate impacts for the seven national performing arts training organisations as students arrive at these organisations with a more limited range of skills and understandings. Further, the decline of support for the performing arts in schools and the University sector in turn affects the quality and ability of professional artists to tell Australian stories (Pillar 1 - First Nations First and Pillar 2 - A Place for Every Story) through their work.

- 1. We recommend that the significant role that Universities play in supporting education and innovation in the cultural and creative industries be recognised and supported through increased funding for undergraduate and graduate coursework programs.*

The University sector is unique in providing advanced professional education and training for artists through the pursuit of Creative Practice PhDs which provide industry professionals with opportunities to focus on creative innovation and development over a sustained period of time (3 years). The costs of producing a creative practice PhD are significantly more than those of producing a PhD via thesis as research. Findings are presented through public performances (concerts, dance works, theatre performance, interactive exhibitions and gallery presentations as examples) which often involve the employment of other independent artists from the sector and are attended by the public. These make a significant contribution to innovation in the performing arts sector.

2. *We recommend that this significant contribution by the University sector to innovating the cultural and creative industries be recognised and supported through increased funding for Creative Practice PhD programs.*

ToR 5. Whether the Revive policy and relevant state government policies and spending provide sufficient support and impetus to rebuild and sustain Victoria's cultural and creative industries

The ABC and SBS have made major contributions historically to the cultural landscape and dissemination of Australian music in metropolitan, regional and remote areas. The steady decline and eventual closing of ABC radio's *Australian Music Unit* over the period 2014 - 2023 has had a significant impact on the cultural sector ([ref](#)), and undermines realisation of Pillar 3 - The Centrality of the Artist. Musicians and artists are no longer commissioned and employed to create, present, and disseminate cultural practice through this unit, and the decline in this opportunity in Victoria is significant. Further cuts to the cultural sector were evidenced in the redundancies in 2023 of the ABC Arts Digital Editor and Managing Editor Arts and the end of an online editorial dedicated solely to arts ([ref](#)). We recommend that this funding be restored as a critical strategy in rebuilding and sustaining Victoria's cultural and creative industries.

3. *We recommend that strategies be identified to redress the disappearance of Australian creative and cultural content, critique, commentary and arts journalism from public broadcasters.*

1300 live music venues in Australia, including 256 in Victoria alone have closed since COVID-19 began ([ref](#)). Additionally, major national music festivals that have provided employment to artists, and visibility and promotion of local music culture to audiences have been cancelled permanently over the past 10 years from popular music events ([ref](#)) to multi-genre arts and music events such as MONA FOMA. In Victoria, the amalgamation of major Victorian arts festivals (such as White Night and Melbourne Festival into RISING), changed the distribution of major arts events in Victoria, the employment of arts workers, and access to the performing arts for audiences. Together, these infrastructural changes to the music landscape have significantly reduced the capacity, scale and reach of Australian music. The decrease in possible 'gigs' has also impacted music students in Victoria, meaning they are less likely to find music work to sustain them during their studies. These financial impacts have affected the quality and quantity of the music graduate pipeline in Victoria and

nationally. The rebuilding and redevelopment of venues, festivals and organisations under Pillar 4 - Strong Cultural Infrastructure is crucial to the health of the sector and will improve the goals of Pillar 5 - Engaging the Audience.

4. *We recommend that consideration be given to reviving the Victorian live music sector through re-establishing venue opportunities including local festivals, and pop-up events, and financial support to existing independent venues and/or artists to present live music performance.*

References

Canham, N. [*Preparing musicians for precarious work: Transformational approaches to musicians careers education*](#). Routledge.

Gross, S.A. & Musgrave, G. (2020). [*Can music make you sick?: Measuring the price of musical ambition*](#). University of Westminster Press.

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